

Coins

Whiz past uncirculated traps

By Roger Boye

COINS BEING sold as uncirculated should be examined carefully before purchase to determine if the merchandise is what it's advertised to be.

Coins which have been cleaned or "whizzed" are sometimes incorrectly sold as uncirculated. Cleaned coins have been washed or polished to remove dirt, tarnish or other foreign matter, and they often have a deceptively shiny appearance.

"Whizzed" coins have been polished and buffed and even treated with a chemical to make the coin appear in better condition than it actually is.

A coin is not necessarily uncirculated if it appears "shiny" or "like new." Coins advertised as uncirculated should be examined with a magnifying glass for any indication of wear. For example, the high points on the Washington quarter

[which will show wear first] are Washington's hair in front of and back of the ear and, on the reverse, the feathers on the eagle's breast.

If these high points are worn, the coin will rate only "about uncirculated" or even "extremely fine" condition rather than "uncirculated," regardless of how brilliant the shine on the coin's surface. An uncirculated coin, by definition, has never entered circulation and will show no wear. And, of course, an uncirculated coin usually will command a price two or three times that of a coin in extremely fine condition.

Incidentally, an especially well-struck uncirculated coin with sharp design for every minute detail will command a higher price than will an average-struck uncirculated coin. Dealers sometimes will indicate the best struck uncirculated coins with the designation of "gem" or "choice" uncirculated.

READERS planning vacations in Philadelphia and Denver have written and asked about tours of the U.S. mints in those cities.

Tourists are welcomed from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday thru Friday at the Philadelphia Mint, 5th and Arch Streets. Tours are self-conducted—visitors view equipment making U.S.